

In the Claims:

1 1. (currently amended) An apparatus for longitudinally
2 orienting elongated strands of a bulk material, said
3 apparatus comprising:

4 a plurality of vertically extending orienting elements
5 that form orienting passages therebetween adapted to have
6 said elongated strands flow ~~therethrough~~ through said
7 orienting passages in a longitudinally oriented manner;

8 a drive connected to at least some of said orienting
9 elements to move ~~the same~~; said at least some of said
10 orienting elements; and

11 a conveyor arrangement that is located below said
12 orienting passages to receive said elongated strands
13 thereon on said conveyor arrangement and that is adapted to
14 convey said elongated strands in a conveying direction;

15 wherein at least a first group of said orienting
16 elements are shiftable and thereby adjustable relative to
17 a second group of said orienting elements ~~so as to adjust~~
18 ~~respective widths of said orienting passages~~ in an
19 adjustment direction perpendicular to said conveying
20 direction so as to adjust respective widths of said
21 orienting passages in said adjustment direction.

1 2. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim 1,
2 wherein said orienting elements comprise discs, said
3 apparatus further comprises a rotatable shaft on which said
4 discs are mounted parallel to one another to form a

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5 respective disc roll, ~~[[and]]~~ said shaft is oriented with
6 an axis thereof parallel to said adjustment direction
7 direction, said first group of said orienting elements is
8 a first group of said discs mounted on said rotatable shaft
9 to form a first said disc roll, and said first group of
10 said discs are axially shiftable along said rotatable shaft
11 or said rotatable shaft is axially shiftable together with
12 said first group of said discs mounted thereon so as to
13 adjust said widths of said orienting passages in said
14 adjustment direction.

1 3. (original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said
2 orienting elements comprise at least one of guide walls and
3 discs, and wherein said drive is a rotating drive or a
4 vertical motion drive that is coupled to at least one of
5 said guide walls and said discs.

1 4. (original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said
2 widths of said orienting passages are at most one half of
3 an average length of said elongated strands.

1 5. (currently amended) An apparatus for longitudinally
2 orienting elongated strands of a bulk material, said
3 apparatus comprising:

4 a plurality of disc rolls that each respectively
5 include a rotatable shaft extending axially in an axial
6 direction, and a plurality of discs arranged on said shaft
7 parallel to each other vertically and perpendicularly to

8 said axial direction and spaced apart from one another
9 along said axial direction;

10 a rotation drive coupled to said disc rolls to rotate
11 said disc rolls; and

12 a conveyor arrangement that is located below said disc
13 rolls to receive said elongated strands thereon on said
14 conveyor arrangement and that is adapted to convey said
15 elongated strands in a conveying direction perpendicular to
16 said axial direction;

17 wherein said discs form vertical orienting passages
18 therebetween respectively between adjacent ones of said
19 discs, and said orienting passages are adapted to have said
20 elongated strands flow therethrough through said orienting
21 passages in a longitudinally oriented manner onto said
22 conveyor arrangement located therebelow; and

23 wherein at least a first group of said discs are
24 shiftable and thereby adjustable in said axial direction
25 relative to a second group of said discs so as to adjust
26 respective widths of said orienting passages in said axial
27 direction.

1 6. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein each
2 respective one of said orienting passages is formed between
3 two of said discs that are adjacent to each other in said
4 axial direction and that are respectively components of two
5 of said disc rolls that are adjacent to each other in said
6 conveying direction, and wherein said width of said

7 respective orienting passage is given by an adjustable
8 spacing between said two discs in said axial direction.

1 7. (original) The apparatus according to claim 6, wherein said
2 two of said disc rolls are arranged so that said discs of
3 one of said two disc rolls overlappingly intermesh in axial
4 interspacings between said discs of the other of said two
5 disc rolls.

1 8. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said
2 discs of each one of said disc rolls are all spaced
3 uniformly apart from one another by equal interspacing
4 distances in said axial direction.

1 9. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said
2 plurality of disc rolls includes at least three of said
3 disc rolls, and wherein said first group of said discs that
4 are adjustable are said discs of at least one of said three
5 disc rolls.

1 10. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said
2 first group of said discs are fixedly mounted on said shaft
3 of an adjustable one of said disc rolls, wherein said shaft
4 of said adjustable one of said disc rolls is axially
5 adjustable in said axial direction relative to another one
6 of said disc rolls.

1 11. (currently amended) The apparatus according to claim 5,
2 wherein said first group of said discs that are adjustable
3 are axially movably mounted on said shaft of one of said
4 disc rolls so ~~as to be~~ that said first group of said discs
5 are movable in said axial direction along said shaft.

1 12. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein an
2 axial range of adjustability of said first group of said
3 discs that are adjustable extends maximally to an axial
4 interspacing distance between successive ones of said discs
5 on a respective one of said shafts.

1 13. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said
2 first group of said discs are manually adjustable in said
3 axial direction.

1 14. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, further
2 comprising an adjustment drive coupled to said first group
3 of said discs and adapted to provide a power-driven
4 adjustment of said first group of said discs in said axial
5 direction.

1 15. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, further
2 comprising a housing in which said disc rolls are arranged
3 to form a strand spreader head, and wherein said conveyor
4 arrangement comprises a forming belt arranged below said
5 housing.

1 16. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said
2 widths of said orienting passages are at most one half of
3 an average length of said elongated strands.

1 17. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein all
2 of said discs have the same diameter.

1 18. (original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein said
2 first group of said discs can be adjusted to simultaneously
3 form two different sizes of said orienting passages having
4 different dimensions of said widths in said axial direction
5 respectively between said discs of said first group and
6 said discs of said second group alternately in succession
7 in said axial direction.

19. (canceled).

20. (canceled).

1 21. (currently amended) A method of using the apparatus
2 according to claim 1, comprising the steps:

- 3 a) feeding a bulk flow of said bulk material comprising
4 said elongated strands onto said orienting elements;
5 b) driving said at least some of said orienting elements
6 with said drive to cause a rotating or oscillating
7 motion of said at least some of said orienting
8 elements, and to cause said elongated strands to flow
9 downward through said orienting passages and to

10 thereby be oriented longitudinally in said
11 longitudinally oriented manner;
12 c) depositing said elongated strands in said
13 longitudinally oriented manner extending along said
14 conveying direction onto said conveyor arrangement;
15 d) conveying said elongated strands with said conveyor
16 arrangement; and
17 e) before or during said steps a), b) and/or c), shifting
18 and thereby adjusting said first group of said
19 orienting elements in said adjustment direction
20 relative to said second group of said orienting
21 elements so as to adjust said widths of said orienting
22 passages in said adjustment direction, dependent on at
23 least one of geometric dimensions of said elongated
24 strands, dimensional tolerances of said elongated
25 strands, and a flow rate of said feeding of said bulk
26 flow.

[RESPONSE CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE]